

**STATEMENT BEFORE EPA AGING SESSION, APRIL  
15,2003, IOWA CITY, IA**

I appreciate this opportunity to advocate for a significant and more realistic appraisal of where senior citizens should be positioned in the thought processes of our federal government.

It is difficult, if not virtually impossible, to present rationales that will differ from those offered here by others. But, perhaps the value is to be found in adding another voice.

We hear many conflicting proposals, most are predicated upon the desired predetermined outcome of whatever issues are under consideration. Some are unfortunately ridiculous, such as the “reduced value” of a human life, which has slipped to \$2.3 million for those over 70 years old, such as myself. It is tragically humorous to realize that my life was once valued at \$6.1 million, dropped to \$3.7 million and finally crashed to only \$2.3 million when I passed 70, three years ago.

As is true for so many seniors, my activities in both the private and public sectors have not diminished. As a political conservative and a social liberal, I find no dearth of active opportunities. Today's session is but one example. Many with whom I come in contact daily can be accurately defined as “swamped” by the demand for their time, talents, and experience. I would argue that we are at least deserving of the higher valuation the government places upon teenagers!

Admittedly that argument isn't rational, but neither is the devaluation of Iowa's seniors, who constitute a high proportion of the state's population. Many seniors, particularly in the agricultural sector, are contributing exactly the same economic value as before they hit “retirement age”. And if they are



otherwise occupied, it is because they answer "yes" to the many calls made upon their time. I'm informed, for example, that over 500 seniors from just seven of Iowa's ninety-nine counties serve through the Heritage Agency on Aging in varied and important roles. Many others fill vital roles in SCORE, local Chamber of Commerce advisory roles and comparable initiatives. Are these people deserving of being undervalued?

The point is that when budgeting and funding decisions are being made regarding an agency like the EPA, damaging effects will result from ridiculous valuations of human life. For example, a less aggressive clean air enforcement role, reflecting under funding, will evolve into a classic "rob Peter to pay Paul" scenario as today's young people age. Air pollution equates to lung deterioration and heart disease, leading directly to increased Medicare costs, which are already at an unmanageable level.

Thus, the argument is not simply for maintaining or increasing federal support, but, rather, for taking the long-term view and realizing that there is often a costly consequence, always a price to pay. We need to do everything possible to avoid part of that price being the human agony of injured health for millions of people, old or young.

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